HISTORICAL LIGHT ON RESURRECTION EXPERIENCE.

Easter, April 13, 1941

I take it for granted that we all know what we mean by history and by experience. The commonly accepted definition of resurrection is "a rising again from the dead". Resurrection also means "a rising again; resumption of vigor; restoration; revival." At Eastertime Christian thought is directed in an attempt to link history, experience and resurrection together to prove that resurrection is an historical fact and an actual experience. Undoubtedly the Easter messages that are being given this day will disclose a confusion of terms and will result in a division of opinion regarding them, my own message not excepted. The reason for this is not far to seek. Ours is a scientific age which has changed our whole outlook upon life. Science deals only with the facts of phenomena, with the physical aspects of life. All philosophical reasoning, all searching for the truth, all religious thinking has been profoundly influenced by the scientific method and spirit. Ours is the age of rationalism and naturalism. On the other hand, our personal lives are still largely guided by our desires and the urges that well up within us. The heart influences our judgments and opinions often more than does the mind. And so we find a tendency today to rationalize life, to reduce human existence to a naturalistic, animal basis; but there still remains within the consciousness of man a feeling, a conviction that he is more than animal, that he has within him that which transcends the animal, the physical; that he is also a spiritual being living in a spiritual world just as real and just as subject to law as is the physical world. Hence the human problem, not only of good and evil, but of confusions and contradictions. Life is a maze of complexities! Bearing this fact in mind let us proceed with our Easter message.

After the crucifixion of Jesus on Calvary his body was placed in a tomb hewn out of rock and situated in a near-by garden. The tomb was was sealed by rolling a great stone to the entrance of the sepulchre. The deed was done, the crowds dispersed and all went home.

The soldiers went back to their barracks. They did not feel much about the incident one way or the other; they had done their duty as soldiers of Rome and that was that.

The Sanhedrin went home- congratulating one another on having put an end to another radical, gloating over their victory. They had saved the law from blasphemy, stopping further amendment of the laws of Moses by this young upstart. They had nipped in the bud this beginning of radicalism. I can see them now, their backs to Calvary walking in the direction of the high priests house with all the bravado of self-righteousness. For them the problem of Jesus was ended.

The death of Jesus, seen thus as the crowing act of his life and character, appeals to Xns as the greatest demonstration of self-sacrificing love in all history. The love thus shown is not only that of Jesus but of God himself. It pictures the love of God coming to us in wisdom and power: in wisdom which far transcends the wisdom of the world, and in power immeasurably beyond and greater than the powers of self-centered, self-seeking, selfish men, ~~the~~ worldly wisdom which regards the wisdom of God as foolishness but which from the beginning of the human race has kept humanity writhing in a caldron of hatred and fear and ~~suffering~~ and strife and suffering. God loves sinful men with the same self-denying, ~~love~~ patient, forgiving love that Jesus Jesus had for those who put him to death. When men realize that the selfishness that ~~killed~~ Jesus is the same spirit that still dominates human life, that it is typical of all human selfishness and sin; and when they realize that he, understanding all that such selfishness meant, still loved those who put him to death, harboring no resentment, thinking only in terms of forgiveness; and when, finally, they realize that all this is a picture of God's eternal attitude toward man, then the Cross becomes the window thru which men have discovered God, and with that discovery of the Infinite Love there comes inevitable shame and penitence, surrender and obedience. That is how the Cross saves men. It is not the literal crucifixion, not the physical pain of the crucified one, not even Jesus himself as a dying martyr, but the discovery of God in and thru all this spectacle of love, that brings one to the great desire to live as an obedient child of such a Father.

The supreme religious significance of Jesus, then, is that he shows us, by his loving life and loving death, that GOD IS LOVE. Jesus did not make God love ~~God~~ men: he simply makes it clear that God does love them. He did not make God's forgiveness possible; he made it credible. He reveals the Infinite Love which is at the heart of the universe, and in the light of that revelation men may, if they will, put themselves "in tune with the Infinite".

"If any man would come after me, let him renounce selfishness, take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever is anxious to keep his life safe, shall lose it; but whoever for my cause loses his life, the same shall save it." (George Walter Fiske). Matt 16:24-25.

Real orthodoxy in Jesus' religion is not right beliefs about the Cross, but living the Cross, for his sake. "Safety First" may be the right motto for our auto-highways, but for Christian living the motto is-"Service First".

If God is like Jesus, it follows that Jesus is like God. And it follows furtner that all who become Christlike become God-like. To share the spirit of Jesus,;to see life thru his eyes; to feel the pressure of the world in its darkness and ignorance and sin in the face of the sum-total of human knowledge to date, with his forgiving sympathy; to work shoulder to shoulder with him in his enterprise of redemption, persuading all mento live as become the sons of God- this is to be Christian. It is to be in some measure what Jesus was- a son of God.

Read Kagawa's statement.

The sacrifice of Jesus was a voluntary act on his part. Neither do we have to take up our cross and follow him, if we do not wish to do so.

Livingstone, Dr.Grenfell and others. Muriel Lester.

But if we do desire to take up our cross and serve the cause of Christ, then, like him, we must make sacrifice.

To gain his child-like humility we must crucify pride;
To gain the respect of others, we must crucify egotism.
To accept Jesus' idea of true greatness, we must crucify worldly ambition.
To live out his idea of neighborliness, we must crucify race prejudice and clannishness.
To exercise his forgiving spirit we must crucify our grudges and spites desire for vindictiveness.
To love as Jesus loved we must crucify our hatred and anger
To live as Jesus lived we must serve as Jesus served.

Life's greatest joy comes to only those who live and love sacrificially for others. The very hardships and suffering which result from such living and serving bring greater joy and satisfaction than all the pleasures and possessions of selfish and self-centered living.

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